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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A

COUNTRY Poland

REPORT NO.

SUBJECT Interior Travel Procedures: Rail/Bus/Air/Truck (Hitch-Hiking)

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SOURCE

Rail and Bus Travel

1. "According to information received from some recently arrived [prior to Dec 53] refugees from Poland, two kinds of travel are now most popular there: railway and bus. In contrast to pre World War II conditions bus communications in inter-town traffic has immensely expanded. The state-owned PKS--autobus net--embraces the whole country, even shuttling to small villages.

2. "Railway tickets are bought customarily at the general railway cashier offices. In some of the large towns special cash ticket offices are operated for military personnel. These ticket offices have mainly female attendants. Tickets can also be bought on railway trains; in such a case the traveller must pay an additional six zlotys. On the other hand, it is possible to pay en route for price differentials when deciding to make a longer trip or pay fast-train extra dues.

3. "Ticket sellers at railway stations wear, as a rule, civilian clothing. Only in small places, where the 'station-commander' is also the ticket seller, do they usually wear railway uniform. In 1953, all railway personnel in Poland were outfitted with new uniforms, in a dark-gray cloth with high collars and long trousers. To the edge of the collar and on the round cap with its dark-red ribbon (the square-shaped cap disappeared completely) are fastened the railway insignia and golden squares, in number defining the rank. The caps are trimmed with a silver cord. The insignia are mounted on red squares fastened to the collar tabs.

4. "Some categories of travellers are entitled to preferential price treatment: railway personnel and their dependents, laborers using the workers' trains, schoolchildren, militia and UB functionaries, military personnel and people travelling on the sponsored furlough-system (wczasy). Price reductions range from 80% to 30%. Railway personnel and their dependents are also entitled to a limited number of free railway tickets.

5. "PKS autobus tickets are on sale in autobus stations, located in almost all towns.

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that can be bought for a few dozen zlotys. In these 'necessaires' most passengers also carry drinks. Alcoholic beverages, apart from beer, are not sold on trains or at station buffets. Nearly everybody is equipped with the so-called cwiartka for 21 zlotys. Sometimes better schnaps can be seen; for example, cherry for 32 zlotys a quarter, or Krakowianka-(also a cherry) or Pomaranczowka (orange schnaps) or Likier Lubuski which is sold in half-liter stone bottles. Wine is rarely seen. If a passenger is observed with wine, he is almost certain to be a repatriate from France. Those people prefer --in line with habits adopted in France-- to drink wine instead of heavy and hard liquors. Popular homemade wine is for sale at 13 to 35 zlotys per liter.

3. "Besides the people carrying food trays, other salesmen frequently go through the trains. Communist newspapers and books are offered by special messengers of the Ruch state-owned distribution organization. People are very willing to buy these newspapers and books, Communist of course, they are the cheapest reading matter behind the Iron Curtain. This reading also detains them from talking to their travelling companions. People in a compartment rarely talk. There is always the possibility of someone in the crowd being an informer or agent.

4. "Third class compartments are always jammed on the trains. Only a few categories of passengers enjoy special privileges. On all through trains there are special compartments for mothers with infants. These compartments are also open to pregnant women. For invalids and old people there are sometimes special reserved seats (two such seats are ordinarily reserved on the PKS bus system). Otherwise it is first come, first served. This rule applies on railway platforms. Of course, in second-class compartments on international trains behind the Iron Curtain as well as in first-class everybody finds a seat. But these classes are far too expensive for the man on the street and are certainly reserved for people travelling on duty or as guests of the government.

5. "Sometimes there are special arrangements for fares. A person who travels on a PKS autobus frequently on the same route and becomes friendly with the conductor may succeed after a while in travelling without a ticket. In such case the money wanders into the conductor's pocket and, a much lower rate is arranged between conductor and travelling friend. The same custom has taken root on local trains. Passengers are entering the train with platform tickets only paying on board a 'special rate' to the friendly conductor. In order to fight this custom the PKS has lately organized a special control system. Control cars manned usually by three functionaries are travelling the bus routes. From time to time they stop a bus in the center of the road and make a check. Everybody without a ticket must leave the autobus and of course the conductor is making his last trip. Inspections on railway trains are less frequently. It is quite an exception for a special inspector to appear on a train.

Air Travel

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25X1 "It is quite unusual to travel by air now in Poland. Of the [Polish] refugees now in Berlin, [redacted] only one ever used this means of transportation. [redacted] normal passenger air tickets have been introduced only since 1950. Before, on the country lines, Dakota transport-planes were in use without any civilian travel-arrangement. During winter time such air travel was very uncomfortable with no heating at all. Air tickets can be obtained now in all Orbis travel offices. Passengers are taken now by the Lit air line from the city to the airport (no special fee charged for this transportation). Two-motor engines only are in use on the Lot line inside Poland. No food is served on the internal routes. No special document-checking is required. Most of the passengers, according to this refugee, seemed to be travelling on business.

Hitch-Hiking

"A traveller in Poland can also 'thumb a ride'. The regular transport trucks that belong to the PKS enterprise or to Hartwig pick up hitch hikers from time to time. The charge for such a journey is much cheaper than on conventional transport. Usually the drivers charge half the price of a regular PKS rate. Such an arrangement is naturally a private deal."

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Otherwise, they can be bought from the bus conductor on the autobus itself. PKS personnel (men and women) wear uniforms similar to those of railway employees. The only difference is that their uniform has a so-called oblong scarf-neck, showing a black tie.

"In none of the railway cash ticket offices or the autobus ticket stations does a person have to produce an identity card. Tickets--even to the so-called restricted areas--can be bought without the need to submit a travel permit. Checking of personal documents is left to the special functionaries of the MO or WOP in the frontier belt.

Railway Travel

After purchase of a rail ticket a passenger reaches the platform through a ticket check point; as all over Europe except Switzerland. But here also there is no checking of credentials. A good number of people are just accompanying the travellers and carry platform tickets. These platform tickets have been introduced at practically all large railway stations for everybody who wants to get to the platform or to use some railway installation. The times when railway stations were beleaguered by mere loiterers are past. Now only the ticket halls are open from the street. To reach all other points of a station a person must pass through the checking vans. This new regulation was introduced in 1951-1952. One purpose was to kill black market dealings, most of which were operated in stations.

"Although crowds of loiterers have disappeared from the stations there are still plenty of people, for often the railway restaurants are the only places open for long hours. Also in many towns they are the only public installation heated during winter. It is worthwhile to pay one zloty for a platform ticket to reach a warm place.

"It has even become a custom of many functionaries going on travel duty to spend their nights at railway stations. As they are equipped with travel orders they cannot be molested by checking MO patrols. While sitting in a station restaurant or waiting room they are saving money. A functionary pays 15 zlotys to spend the night in a hotel; that is enough for a dinner and a beer in a station restaurant. The actual per diem fund allowance stays untouched.

"The majority of all passengers buy third-class tickets for slow trains. The difference in price between a slow train and an express is approximately 40%. Since the new price raise in Jan 53 travel has become too expensive on express trains. A few examples of ticket prices follow:

- (a) BYTOM-ODYNIA: around 100 zlotys, 3rd class, slow train
- (b) BYTOM-SZCZECIN, 85.40 zlotys, 3rd class, slow train
- (c) KATOWICE-KRAKOW, 18 zlotys, 3rd class, slow train
- (d) BEDZIN-WARSAW, 54 zlotys, 3rd class, slow train

"Travel on these slow trains becomes more and more tiring. The comfortable, restful large Pullman cars have been nearly all withdrawn from the slow-train traffic. On short distances quite a number of freight cars have been put into passenger service by merely installing benches on both sides and cutting in very narrow, small windows.

"Of course, no dining facilities are maintained on these slow trains. From time to time special personnel carry around some refreshments. Prices for this food run high. For a roll with 100 grams of sausage a passenger has to pay seven zlotys; in town restaurants a similar roll costs 4.50 zlotys. Most passengers have taken to bringing their food from home. It is taken along in a briefcase. These have become popular for such purpose. Very few of the briefcases are of real leather as those cost up to 600 zlotys. 'Amerykana'. Usually one sees briefcases of artificial leather or canvas

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